

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 IO-13 JUSE-00
NSAE-00 CTME-00 SNM-05 TRSE-00 ICA-11 NSC-05
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-----126912 080907Z /13

R 072200Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY SUVA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7728
INFO DEA HDQTRS WASHDC
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

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BANGKOK AND MANILA FOR DEA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SNAR, FJ
SUBJECT: FIJI'S BIGGEST DRUG HAUL

REF: SUVA 1297

1. FIJI CUSTOMS COMPTROLLER GARNIER TOLD EMBOFFS THAT FOUR MILLION FIJI DOLLAR DRUG HAUL AT NADI AIRPORT JULY 20 (SEE REF-TEL) WAS BIGGEST IN FIJI'S HISTORY. NEW ZEALAND CITIZEN TRAVELLING UNDER NAME OF CHRISTINA DOREEN SKIPPER WAS COURIER FOR DRUGS (WHICH INCLUDED 44 POUNDS INDIAN HEMP AND 4.5 POUNDS HEROIN NO. 4 TESTED AT 95 PERCENT PURITY) AND HAS BEEN SENTENCED TO SIX YEARS IMPROSIONMENT.

2. GARDINER SAID SKIPPER HAD ARRIVED ON UTA FLIGHT FROM SINGAPORE WHICH HAD MADE STOPS IN BRISBANE AND NOUMEA BEFORE REACHING NADI. AIRPORT CUSTOMS HAD NOT RECEIVED TIP-OFF THAT SKIPPER WAS CARRYING DRUGS, BUT HAD BEEN WATCHING FOR POSSIBLE COURIER
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BECAUSE OTHER PARTIES BELIEVED TO BE PART OF A DRUG RING HAD ARRIVED NADI ONLY A FEW DAYS BEFORE. SHIPPER WAS GIVEN CAREFUL CUSTOMS CHECK BECAUSE SHE HAD ACTED NERVOUS. AT AIRPORT SHE HAD BEEN UNABLE TO OPEN SUITCASES, CLAIMING THAT HER HUSBAND IN NEW ZEALAND HAD THE KEY, SO CUSTOMS HAD SEIZED SUITCASES AND ALLOWED HER TO GO TO HOTEL WHERE SHE WAS KEPT UNDER SURVEILLANCE. CUSTOMS THEN FORCED SUITCASES OPEN (THEY HAD BEEN

GLUED SHUT) AND FOUND DRUGS. FIJI AUTHORITIES MEANWHILE RECEIVED PHONE CALL FROM MAN IN NEW ZEALAND CLAIMING TO BE SKIPPER'S HUSBAND. FIJI CUSTOMS TIPPED OFF NEW ZEALAND AUTHORITIES WHICH LED TO ARREST IN NEW ZEALAND OF OTHERS BELIEVED TO BE PART OF THE RING. QUESTION OF SKIPPER'S TRUE IDENTITY IS STILL UNDER INVESTIGATION.

3. GARDINER NOTED THAT HEROIN, BECAUSE OF ITS PURITY, IS BELIEVED TO HAVE COME FROM GOLDEN TRIANGLE AREA. HE SAID THAT AUTHORITIES BELIEVE TRAFFICKERS FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA TO NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA ARE INCREASINGLY USING ISLAND STOP-OVERS AS MEANS OF GOING CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES IMPRESSION ORDINARY TOURISM IS INVOLVED. A PASSENGER WHO HAS STOPPED SEVERAL PLACES, ALTHOUGH THEY MAY BE IN SMALL COUNTRIES LESS LIKELY TO DETECT NARCOTICS, WILL OFTEN BE PAID LESS ATTENTION THAN ONE ARRIVING DIRECT FROM AN ASIAN PORT. HE ALSO SAID SMALL ISLAND COUNTRIES ARE BEING USED AS POINTS FOR EXCHANGE OF CONTRABAND FOR ONWARD SHIPMENT BY A DIFFERENT COURIER.

4. GARDINER ASKED WHETHER TRAINING SEMINAR FOR SOUTH PACIFIC COUNTRIES (AS HAD BEEN DISCUSSED WITH MANILA SAIC MANSON DURING HIS VISIT HERE) WOULD TAKE PLACE. EMBOFF SAID MANSON HAD MADE SUGGESTION TO HEADQUARTERS, AND IT APPEARS THAT TRAINING HAS BEEN APPROVED ALTHOUGH, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, TIMING HAS NOT YET BEEN ESTABLISHED. GARDINER SAID HE WOULD PASS FINAL REPORT OF SKIPPER CASE TO EMBASSY FOR TRANSMISSION TO DEA MANILA.
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5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THEY WERE UP AGAINST WHAT MAY BE A RELATIVELY SMALL AND UNSOPHISTICATED GROUP OF TRAFFICKERS, FIJI AUTHORITIES ARE RIGHTFULLY PROUD OF THEIR HANDLING OF THIS CASE. RESULTS OBTAINED FROM NOTIFYING NEW ZEALAND AUTHORITIES HAS REINFORCED THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF NEED FOR COOPERATION AMONG GOVTS IN THE AREA. CASE SPEAKS WELL FOR DESIRABILITY OF REGIONAL SEMINAR AS PREVIOUSLY SUGGESTED BY DEA AND SUPPORTED BY THIS EMBASSY.

6. FOR DEA MANILA: YOUR TEL, MANILA 13316, RECEIVES SUBSEQUENT TO PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT. REFTEL WAS TRANSMITTED MANILA UNDER TITLE "SUVA HIGHLIGHTS," BUT CONTAINS ONLY PRELIMINARY REPORT OF CASE. FYI, MAN ON THE SPOT WAS NADI AIRPORT COLLECTOR OF CUSTOMS, MR. RANJIT SINGH.
STILLMAN

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Message Attributes

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